

APPENDIX IV: GLOSSARY

Aboriginal - Prehistoric peoples in North America.

Aeolian - Carried by the wind.

Alluvium - Deposits of gravel, sand, and soil which are transported by flowing water.

Archaeology - The study of the people of the past through the recovery and analysis of the artifacts they left behind and their context.

Archival Research - Research done at places in which public or historical records, charters and documents are stored and preserved.

Artifact - Any object shaped or modified by man, or as a result of human activity.

Assemblage - The array of contemporary objects and associations found at an archaeological site.

Base camp - A prehistoric dwelling site for hunter-gatherers from which resource procurement forays are made.

Bay/Basin Feature - Also known as whale wallows, these shallow ponds, thought to have been formed during the end of the Pleistocene, represent a favored prehistoric settlement location.

Biface - A stone tool that has been flaked on both sides.

Bifurcate - A projectile point from the Archaic Period (6500 B. C.), it is a small point with a notched base.

Boreal - The forest areas and tundras of the North Temperate Zone and Arctic region.

B.P. - Years before present, which has been standardized at A.D. 1950.

Cache - A collection of artifacts and/or ecofacts which have been deliberately stored for future use.

Colluvium - A loose deposit of rock debris accumulated at the base of a cliff or slope.

Cobble - Frequent lithic tool resource for prehistoric peoples.

Core - A piece of stone from which other pieces of stone are flaked off to make artifacts.

Cortex - Weathered exterior of a piece of lithic material, may be either vein or water-worn cortex.

Culture - The nonbiological mechanism of human adaptation.

Cryptocrystalline - Indistinctly crystalline; having an indistinguishable crystalline structure. For example, chert and jasper.

Datum - A fixed point from which all levels are measured. A datum line is a line of fixed elevation secured by nails in the baulk of a square to help in making a scaled drawing of the baulk face.

Debitage - Waste material from the manufacture of stone tools.

Deciduous - Leaf bearing trees that shed in autumn.

Diagnostic - Artifact with identifying traits that categorize the item to a specific time period.

Ecofact - The non-artifactual remains found in archaeological sites such as seeds, bones, and plant pollen.

Estuary - The part of the wide lower course of a river where its current is met by the tides.

Extant - Still in existence.

Fall Line - A transition zone from the Piedmont Uplands to the flatter Coastal Plain.

Feature - Any soil disturbance or discoloration that reflects human activity or an artifact that, being too large to remove from a site, normally is recorded only; for example, house, storage pits, etc. can also be a very dense collection of artifacts: for example, a lithic chipping feature.

Flake - A piece of waste material from the manufacture of stone tools, caused by percussion or pressure applied to the object by an external agent (e.g. hammerstone, antler pressure flaker); flake itself may be further utilized as a tool (see "Debitage").

Flotation - The use of fluid suspension to recover tiny plant and bone fragments from archaeological sites.

Fluvial - Produced by the action of flowing water.

Geomorphology - The geologic study of the configuration and evolution of land forms.

Historic - The time period after the appearance of written records. In North America, this generally refers to the time period after the beginning of European settlement at approximately 1600 A.D.

Holocene - The latest division of the Quarternary period, which commenced around 12,000 B.P.

Illuviation - The deposition in an underlying soil layer of colloids, soluble salts, and mineral particles leached out of an overlying soil layer.

In Situ - In the original place.

Interface - A surface regarded as the common boundary of two bodies or spaces.

Lithic - Pertaining to or consisting of stone.

Loam - A loose soil composed of roughly equal parts of silt, clay and sand, especially a kind containing organic matter and of great fertility.

Locus - A defined archaeological site or testing location.

Macro-band Base Camp - For a hunter-gatherer society, an archaeological site one hectare or larger in area characterized by a wide variety of tool types, abundant ceramics, semi-subterranean house structures, storage pit features, and abundant debitage from tool manufacture and reduction.

Mega Fauna - A number of species of presently extinct mammals including mammoths and mastodons.

Mesic Forest - A vegetation pattern characterized by relatively wet-adapted plant species, such as oak and hemlock forests.

Micro-band - A component of macro-band, perhaps one or two extended families, which periodically operates independently of the macro-band group.

Microenvironment - A characteristic biotic assemblage, often exploited by a distinctive ecological niche.

Midden - Refuse deposits resulting from human activities, generally consisting of soil, food remains such as animal bone and shell, and discarded artifacts.

Pedestrian Survey - The walking and collecting of an archaeological site without the excavation of subsurface units.

Pedogenic - Referring to the development of soils in place.

Physiographic Zone - Regions or areas that are characterized by a particular geography, geology, and topography.

Piedmont Region - An area of gently rolling to hilly land lying between the Appalachian Mountains and the Atlantic Coastal Plain. The division between the Piedmont Region and the Coastal Plain is marked by the Fall Line.

Pleistocene - A division of the geologic Quarternary Period, which began around 2.3 to 3 million years ago and is associated with rapid hominid evolution from Australopithecinae to Homo sapiens sapiens.

Plow zone - In a plowed field, the upper layer of organic soil which is continually reworked by the plow. In the Middle Atlantic region this is about 8-12 inches thick.

Post hole - A hole dug in the ground into which a post is placed.

Post mold - The organic stain in the ground which is left by a decayed wooden post. A post mold stain may occur inside of a post hole stain on an archaeological site.

Prehistoric - The time period before the appearance of written records. In the New World this generally refers to indigenous, pre-Contact societies.

Primary Lithic Resource - Outcrops of workable stone that are found within the matrix of their original formation.

Procurement Site - A place that is visited because there is a particular item to acquire; i.e., lithic outcrops.

Projectile Point - Strictly speaking, a biface attached to the head of an airborne item of weaponry, like an arrow or a thrown dart; frequently used indiscriminately when referring to any biface.

Quarry Site - A site located at either a primary or secondary outcrop of high-quality lithic material used in the manufacture of stone tools.

Quarry Reduction Station - A place where material obtained from a quarry site such as large flakes, cores and very early stage bifaces were taken for further reduction into smaller primary-thinned bifaces.

Secondary Lithic Resource - Cobbles and boulders of variable size that have been removed from the matrix of their original formation, transported by alluvial or glacial agents, and redeposited at a new location which may be quite distant from their original source.

Sherd - A piece of broken pottery.

Site - A space of ground containing evidence of human occupation that archaeologists select for their dig.

Soil Horizon - Soils are divided in three horizons, which reflect different kinds of chemical and physical processes that have resulted from changing climatic conditions.

Staging Site - A temporary camp where preparations are made for another operation such as a hunting foray.

Stratigraphy - The examination of the soil layering on an archaeological site; the characteristics of each individual stratum and its relationship to others in the sequence is critical to understanding the temporal and spatial characteristics of the site.

Strata - The various layers of human or geological origin which comprise archaeological sites.

Subsoil - Sterile, naturally occurring soils not changed by human occupation.

Surface Collection - Act of walking along a surface such as an open field or plowed field, and collecting artifacts seen on the surface of the ground.

Tool Kit - A collection of artifacts from a sealed context within a site interpreted as being designed for a specific function.

Transect - A single strip of land crossing an area possibly containing an archaeological site. Archaeologists may search a transect rather than survey the whole area.

Transect Sampling - A means of archaeological research design in which the sampling element is a square or rectangular grid.

Topography - The surface physical features and configuration of land.